workers' truth

Toward the International Party of Revolutionary Workers

Vol.2,No.8 **August,1974** **10 cents**

Nixon Out

SO WHAT!

Saving himself a pension of $60,000 a year and a host of other benefits, Richard M. Nixon resigned the office of president rather than lose all this by being impeached. On the evening of August 8, Nixon went on television to announce his resignation from office. During his speech he reminded everyone of his "accomplishments", the most outstanding being his claim to have assured peace throughout the world.

The next day included a departure filled with tears by everyone including Nixon as he made his final exit. Newscasters sobbed about the trouble, pain and ounishment Nixon had suffered by being the first to resign the office of president. Leftists no doubt rejoiced the occasion imagining that the evil had now been exorcised from America.

Later that mourning Gerald Ford was sworn in as the new president. Again tears were shed as Ford offered prayers of condolence for the ex-president. Rumors flew as everyone tried to figure out who would be chosen as the new vice-president. Immediately the news media started announcing all sorts of hopes and goals for the new administration to fulfill.

If we lived in a dream world, perhaps all this carnival would truly be an historically important event, but this is not so. Nothing has changed. We are still in the midst of a new period of international crisis which is leading the world inevitably into world war unless the dying system of capitalism in which we live is destroyed by the revolutionary activity of the working class. The crisis is an inherent part of capitalism which can be terminated in only two ways: the bourgeois solution of war and barbarism, or the international proletarian revolution.

Ford can do absolutely nothing better with the economy than Nixon. In fact, no matter who is running the government, it will not make any difference. Capitalist society is falling apart and no matter who is put in as captain, the ship can not be saved from sinking since it is disintegrating in the water.

Nixon is not the cause of the crisis as the left and most of the rest of the bourgeoisie would have us think (No, Nixon's not "the one"). When one thinks about it, that would be a pretty hard task to perform by one man; that is for one man to be the blame for an INTERNATIONAL crisis. In fact, all around the world, governments have been falling like rain as the bourgeoisie offer scapegoats in answer to the ongoing crisis.

Nixon, Ford: The personnel has been changed to protect the capitalist state.

As we stated before in WORKERS' TRUTH ("Impeachment and New Elections are Not the Answer", December 1973):

> It is the capitalist class and their economic system, a system based on profit for a few and hard labor or the bread line for the many, that must be gotten rid of. And the way to do it is not by lawsuits, not by impeachment, not by elections, not by amending the Constitution, but by working class socialist revolution.

And again we stated:

> Impeaching Nixon means replacing him with the next in line (probably Gerald Ford). This is no solution for working people. New elections, likewise, are no solution. The real problems facing working people today would be here if McGovern or someone else had won the 1972 election. Even if a "workers Party" were elected, it would be unable to do anything. So long as the capitalist class remains in power socially and economically, the state will serve its interests. Workers' interests will not be served by electing workers to positions within the capitalists' state, but only through smashing that state (government, army, police, etc.) and constructing a new state organized by the working class itself.

Nixon's demise does nothing to stem the tide of capitalist decadence. Only the destruction of the capitalist state and the abolition of all capital relations (wage-labor, market economy, etc.) throughout the world can stop the plunge into barbarism. And this can only be carried out by a class conscious revolutionary working class. It is to this end that revolutionary workers must direct their energies.

Nixon is out? So What!

FORWARD TO THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

—Am

9/23/74

Nationalism and War in Cyprus

As we go to press, a second shaky truce in Cyprus in less than a month has gone up in smoke as Turkish forces are driving forward in an attempt to cut the island in two. The following is a basic policy statement of the Revolutionary Workers Group on the Turkish invasion and the Greek response to it. A more in depth article on the developments in Cyprus and their international ramifications will appwar in next month's WORKERS' TRUTH.

The current conflict in Cyprus represents nothing more than the conflicting interests of Turkey and Greece in the Eastern Meditterranean. Neither the interests of Greece nor those of Turkey can be considered progressive or supportable by the international working class. The Greek and Turkish interests are simply those of the two respective national capital blocs. The Greek, Turkish, and above all, the Cypriot workers and peasants merely represent cannon fodder for the imperialist policies of the two adversaries.

The current conflict can not be seen as an isolated conflagration nor as a simple result of the long-standing tension between Greece and Turkey. On the contrary, it is a manifestation of the deepening of the current conjunctural crisis of capitalism within the context of permanent crisis: imperialist decadence. As Leon Trotsky wrote in THE WAR AND THE INTERNATIONAL just after the outbreak of the First Imperialist World War in 1914:

> War is the method by which capitalism, at the climax of its development, seeks to solve its insoluble contradictions. To this method the proletariat must oppose its OWN method, the method of the Social Revolution.

In order to oppose its revolutionary method to the method of capital, the working class must not allow itself to be diverted into either of the camps of nationalist belligerence or into support for the equally imperialistic "peace efforts" of the "Great Powers".

There is a definite reason why the British and U.S. imperialists seek to put an end to the war in Cyprus before it develops into all-out war between Greece and Turkey. The Greek-Turkish fight virtually destroys the southern flank of NATO against the Soviet Union. Already Greece has withdrawn militarily from NATO (shades of Charles DeGaulle in France) and is threatening to force American troops to leave Greece (shades of Sadat telling the USSR to get out of Egypt).

There is a second reason why the world imperialist powers (including the Soviet Union) have consistently pushed for peace in Cyprus. The possibility exists that the Cyprus war, like all national wars during decadence could explode into a worldwide imperialist war which the U.S., USSR, etc. are not prepared to wage AT THIS TIME.

As for the propaganda of the belligerents themselves, it is the same as that accompanying all imperialist wars. This was aptly summed up in an article in the German publication DIE ZEIT after the first outbreak in July:

> The three-day war on Cyprus was typical of two centuries of European nation-state aberration. It might, for instance, have been 1914. There were trainloads of cheery volunteers. There was an aura of crusading spirit on the one hand and chauvinism on the other.
>
> Appeals were made to God, the fatherland and honor. Despair was matched by patriotic exultation, slogans reminiscent of Bismarck's KULTURKAMPF, race hatred, death wishes.

The working class must have nothing to do with such capitalist mystifications. Our program is the program of socialist revolution, not national defense. Our task is to abolish capital in all its manifestations, not simply oust this or that government clique (e.g. the Papadapoulos junta in Greece). What will the working class have gained if Turkey succeeds in its apparent goal of two states, one Greek, one Turkish in Cyprus? Nothing at all! What will we have gained if Greece is successful in maintaining a "united", "neutral" Cyprus? Nothing at all!

There is only one road forward for the working class in Cyprus and around the world. It is not the road of nationalism nor that of bourgeois pacifism. It is the road of proletarian internationalism and intransigent class struggle against capital -- the road of working class socialist revolution.

THE WORKERS' HAVE NO FATHERLAND!
WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!
FORWARD TO THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

World peace can not be assured by projects utopian or, at bottom, reactionary, such as tribunals of arbitration by capitalist diplomats, diplomatic, "disarmament" conventions, "the freedom of the seas", abolition of the right of maritime arrest, "the United States of Europe", a "customs union for central Europe", buffer states, and other illusions. Imperialism, militarism and war can never be abolished nor attenuated so long as the capitalist class exercises, uncontested, its class hegemony. The sole means of successful resistance, and the only guarantee of the peace of the world, is the capacity for action and the revolutionary will of the international proletariat to hurl its full weight into the balance.

--DIE INTERNATIONALE Group
THESES ON THE TASKS OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL DEMOCRACY
April, 1915

We revolutionary Marxists have no cause for despair. The epoch into which we are now entering will be OUR epoch. Marxism is not defeated. On the contrary: the roar of the cannon in every quarter of Europe heralds the theoretical victory of Marxism. What is left now of the hopes for a "peaceful" development, for a mitigation of capitalist class contrasts, for a regular systematic growth into Socialism?

...The War, therefore, does not solve the labor question on an imperialistic basis, but on the contrary, it intensifies it, putting this alternative to the capitalist world: PERMANENT WAR OR REVOLUTION.

--Leon Trotsky
THE WAR AND THE INTERNATIONAL
November, 1914

Italian Capital's Next Step

The article "Social Crisis in Italy: Economy Nears Collapse" in last month's WORKERS' TRUTH tends to give an incorrect appraisal of the development of events in Italy. It tends to put forward the view that fascism is the NEXT step for the Italian bourgeoisie. While we do feel that the Italian bourgeoisie will probably turn to fascism as the means for autarkising its economy and competing with the other national capital blocs, in order to do this it must FIRST subordinate and subdue the working class. In order to do this the Italian capitalists will put their anti-fascist face forward, building anti-fascist fronts through the unions and bringing the Italian Communist Party into a coalition government. Hoping then to have diverted the workers' struggles into safe channels and defused the militant movement of the class, they will set about the task of waging trade war and mobilizing for shooting war under whatever regime seems to be best (probably fascism).

Thus, it is necessary for the Italian working class to fully understand that anti-fascist democracy and fascism are simply two sides of the same capitalist coin, two steps in the same game plan. If the Italian working class is to avoid defeat, it must not allow itself to be sucked into the anti-fascist fronts of capital. Only a consistent revolutionary struggle against all factions of capital will lead the working class to victory. Anything else leads to defeat.

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The Crisis in Britain

Part Two

The following article is reprinted from the May 1974 issue of WORLD REVOLUTION published in Great Britain.

THE DEEPENING OF THE CRISIS IN BRITAIN

No crisis in capitalism is purely "economic"; the relations of production which characterise the capitalist system do not, except as abstractions, exist independently from the rest of social life. So, as the consequences of these relations of production unfold in the development of the crisis and as the class struggle intensifies, that struggle is not restricted only to the point of production but erupts through other spheres of life. As the crisis deepens so capitalism struggles for control over the working class, encroaching more and more into all aspects of its life, but always the resulting specific oppressions have their deepest roots in the exploitative relations at the point of production. These tendencies have been highlighted in Britain with the intensification of the class struggle since approximately 1965.

During the reconstruction period of 1945-65 it was possible for the working class to fight for and get significant increases in its wage levels, at least in the advanced countries. This was quite compatible with the redevelopment of the national economies weakened or pulverised by the second imperialist war, and the subsequent redivision of the world market. These advances, however, were qualitatively different from those made during the ascendant period of capitalism. During that period the gains the working class made changed its CONDITION within capitalism, affecting many aspect of its social existence. In a period of reconstruction during decadence these gains only appear as an increase in purchasing power. And even this is only achieved at the cost of worsening its condition at work, by the intensification of the production process and the maintenance or increase in the length of the working day. As the reconstruction period drew to a close, and as the living standards and working conditions of the working class were slowly eroded, the class tried to retain its previous position; and so the capitalists resisted with renewed vigour.

This worsening of the working class condition was part of British capital's attempt to increase its competitiveness on the world market. The poor state of British capital was not a recent phenomenon; it had been in decline for a long time because, "insulated" by a colossal empire, it had not felt the same urgency to develop its technology as had other capitals. Its need to be more competitive was especially acute in the face of the accelerating growth, productivity and profitability of other national capitals, particularly those of Germany and Japan who had undergone more reconstruction due to the almost complete destruction of their economies during the war. With a massive influx of American capital their reconstruction started off with much higher levels of technology and productivity; they were also less encumbered by large military expenditures, because of the "protection" of the US through NATO and other defence agreements.

The most significant element in the struggle during the 1960s was undoubtedly the spate of productivity deals which made a much more systematic attack on the working class than it had experienced for some time. These deals reached epidemic proportions with the return of a Labour government to power in 1964. The Labour Party elevated the use of these deals into a theology and, with the backing of the trade unions (the high priests of the labour market) lauded "The white heat of Britain's technological revolution". This policy went hand in hand with cutbacks in defence spending and in other waste areas as they were becoming too onerous on the productive sector, a burden partly expressed in the increasingly severe balance of payments deficits of the time. Although this brought some relief to the chronic agonies of British capital it was short-lived. The British working class, showing a perverse disinclination for the higher levels of exploitation, responded with massive wildcatting.

Plans to better regiment the shop floor were already in hand, however a Royal Commission under Lord Donovan had been set up in 1966 to look into the functioning of the trade unions and the report was published in 1969. By that time the necessity for such measures had been more than adequately demonstrated with the complete failure of the 1967 devaluation. The pay freeze which came in the wake of that devaluation was almost entirely ineffectual because of the militant opposition from the shop floor, opposition which the trade unions had been singularly unable to control.

The reactionary importance of the trade unions cannot be overstated. Just as the ruling class needs police outside the class so it needs them inside, and the unions perform this crucial role as agents of capital inside the class. It is inevitable today that any significant and persistent advance from the class has to confront the state and the task of the unions is to divert struggles into "safe" channels and disarm them. Consequently the illusion that these are "workers organizations" fighting for "workers rights and interests" is one of the most odious bourgeois frauds advanced onto the class. The same applies to the shop stewards, the unions' shop floor acolytes.

Acknowledged by the ruling class (for example in the Donovan report) as crucial elements in the struggle for control over the shop floor, the shop stewards are particularly dangerous because of their proximity to the rank and file. Their credibility does have strong foundations. The shop stewards include solid militants within their ranks; they advance sectional interests; they even have occasional conflicts with the union bureaucracy. But these "facts" must not be allowed to mesmerise. It is because they do THESE things in the negotiation for the price and condition of wage labour WITHIN LIMITS ACCEPTABLE TO CAPITAL that they are such efficient policemen when it comes to preventing the extension of struggles or attempts to transcend localism and sectionalism. They perform an ESSENTIAL function for the capitalist state. Without any doubt, the productivity deals, the rundown of industries (such as coal) and other attacks from the capitalists could not have bitten so deeply into the class had these ideological agents of capitalism not been so effective.

Despite their integration into capital the trade unions opposed the attempts at legislating their control over the shop floor which came via "In Place of Strife". And they had their own good reasons for this opposition. Trade unions in Britain receive considerable credibility in the eyes of their membership because they demonstrate an "independence" from the state. Legislation which threatened to erode this facade was seen to be dangerous, particularly at a time when union authority was already under great stress because of the extreme militancy of the working class. Since the Labour Party relied heavily on trade union support it was not in a position to go ahead with this legislation. The proposed bill was dropped and "voluntary agreements" were intended to replace it. They never did.

It was left to the Conservative government to introduce this kind of legislation and the Industrial Relations Act was passed in 1971. But this was not the only piece of anti-working class legislation enacted during this period. Other measures included the Immigration Acts (Labour in 1968 and Conservative in 1971) and the Housing Finance Act which pushed rents up to "fair" levels; taxation was increased through VAT and other means; the "cheap food" policy was terminated; and enormous cutbacks in welfare which included removal of subsidies on school meals and reductions in education and health expenditure. Unemployment returned to levels not seen since the end of the war - not anything like the thirties but high enough to demonstrate the end of the postwar "prosperity". Inflation has increased steadily over the last few years and reached over 10% in 1973. Wage-gouging efforts under the cover of so-called anti-inflation measures have been rampant.

During the past few years there has hardly been a section of the British working class which has not responded to the intensification of the crisis with increased militancy. Apart from their official actions of 1972 and 1974 the miners have been out in massive wildcats in 1969 and 1970; assembly workers and electricians in the motor industry have been out frequently; there have been numerous dock strikes and disputes; industries such as engineering, steel and shipbuilding have been affected too. Among service workers particularly there has been quite unprecedented militancy; postal workers, gas workers, power engineers, teachers, hospital and ancillary workers, ambulancemen, dustmen and firemen have all taken action. The extent of these struggles can be seen in the strike statistics in the table reproduced here. 1971 and 1972 mark the high points of this tide of economic militancy. From then on it tailed off.

YEAR	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS LOST DUE TO STRIKES
1963	1,755,000
1964	2,277,000
1965	2,925,000
1966	2,398,000
1967	2,787,000
1968	4,690,000
1969	6,846,000
1970	10,980,000
1971	13,551,000
1972	23,909,000
1973	7,173,000

To be continued

Unions, Capitalism an

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNIONS

After 1848, a new type of unionism came to the forefront. This new unionism was built on a much narrower foundation. This "New Model" of unionism was not a trades union but a trade union; that is, a national organization of workers employed in a single craft. Nearly always it was composed of skilled workers, and represented, by and large, the views of these skilled artisans, who believed that the key to their problem lay in the scarcity of labor. The result was a tendency to discount strikes and to rely instead upon keeping down the supply of labor by restricting the number of apprentices, discouraging overtime and in extreme cases subsidizing emigration.

Such were the principles on which the national unions grew up about 1850. Rigidly exclusive and in many cases hereditary, they were the expression of a labor elite which had little concern for the mass of workers.

The first of these new trade unions was the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), founded in 1851 by the merger of a number of smaller craft unions. It was the ASE which developed the prototype for other craft unions. While its membership of 11,000 was a great deal smaller than the half million of the old Grand National, it was, however, a permament dues-paying membership.

In the next ten years the example of the ASE was copied by the Lancashire cotton workers who formed a permanent organization in 1853, the Stonemasons and Ironfounders who doubled their memberships, and the Carpenters (formed in 1860) whose organization soon became nearly the equal of the ASE in numbers and influence.

About 1860 these unions developed an unofficial central leadership, often known as the Junta. Its first circle consisted of Allan and Applegarth of the engineers and Carpenters, Guile of the Ironfounders, Coulson of the Bricklayers and George Odger, the secretary of the London Trades Council.

From its inception the Junta's interest in politics was not in the same tradition as that of the Chartists. Its members had no idea of leading an independent class movement but used their influence in union circles to pressure the existing political parties. They stood just to the left of the Liberal Party and were time and again guilt of the most glaring acts of opportunism because of their lack of any clearly defined political philosophy. It was thus possible for them to collaborate on one hand with members of the Executive of the International Working Men's Association (First International), and on the other, with the Liberals. Their industrial policy was restricted to, as the Webbs put it: "securing for every workman those terms which the best employers were willing voluntarily to grant."

But even at its zenith the influence of the Junta did not go unchallenged. Many sections of industry, including the miners and textile workers, were not organized around this "new model unionism" and it was from them, challenging the domination of the Junta, that the first steps toward a national organization which finally produced the Trade Union Congress (TUC) came about.

It is impossible to select any one conference as being the "first" Trade Union Congress. What is important is that the TUC grew out of a practical need, in this case that of organizing to oppose the conspiracy laws which threatened to put an end altogether to legal trade union activities. In the General Election of 1874 trade union leaders came forward as candidates for the first time independently of the Liberal and Conservative Parties. But by this time the "new model" unionism was already rapidly becoming antiquated, and a new "new unionism" was developing to replace it.

During the 1870's and '80's, the concept of a single working class as well as a single "middle class" began to take root. Furthermore, during this period the unskilled workers were able to imitate the artisans in forming unions of their own, which were eventually admitted to the Trade Union Congress. At the same time the "trades" themselves were being transformed by the mechanization of industry and the growth of the scale of production: factory work replaced the work of the individual craftsman in more and more occupations. Thus it was that the unskilled laborer, struggling for some minimum standards and to safeguard himself against unemployment found allies in the ranks of the disgruntled artisans.

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As a result of all this in 1893 an Independent Labour Party was formed at Bradford with the object of sending workingmen to Parliament, inde-

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l the Working Class

Part Two

by Aaron Asher & David Ross

ons are no longer workers' organiza-
he most trustworthy defenders of the
bourgeois society. Consequently it
that the struggle for socialization
arried on without involving the
the liquidation of the unions.

Luxemburg
ech at the founding conference
the Kommunistische Partei Deutsch-
ds (K.P.D.--German Communist Party)
. 30, 1918 - Jan. 1, 1919

pendent of both the Liberal and Conservative Parties.

The ILP drew a considerable amount of support from the membership of the new unions of the unskilled, who feared that without some sort of legislative assistance their industrial gains would be swept away in the next depression.

SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

In 1884 the Democratic Federation founded three years earlier by H.M. Hydman, changed its name to the Social-Democratic Federation (SDF). The SDF was able to attract, but not always able to retain, some of the most advanced and class consciousness workers and intellectuals. Mainly due to Hydman's unscrupulous and highhanded methods of running the organization, culminating in the scandal of the General Election of 1885 when the Socialist candidates were run on money obtained from the Tories, which soon discredited the Social-Democratic Federation.

The SDF and various other Socialist sects soon fell into isolation, and it was only the mass awakening of the workers and unemployed in East London in the winter of 1886-87, that saved the SDF from oblivion. In 1888 the Socialists marked a major breakthrough in East London. In May they arranged a strike of the women at Bryant and May match factory. This was followed by the organization of a union among the gas workers, which soon led to stunning victories.

The victory of the gas workers was followed by the great dock strike of 1889 led by Burns and Mann, which sent the unskilled workers flocking to the unions. Within a year 200,000 had been organized. By 1893 the Federation with its policy of a minimum wage and a legal limitation of hours, had grown from 36,000 to over 200,000 members.

All this happened in spite of rather than because of the SDF which remained outside the mass movement and even looked upon it with contempt because it was not avowedly socialist. Members of the federation such as Burns and Mann who took an active part in the unions did so as individuals and were often attacked for abandoning their socialist principles.

This policy, while it did not hold back the masses, in the long run proved to be disastrous. The Socialists, who supposedly represented the most advanced elements of the working class, by remaining an isolated sect and refusing to enter into the day to day struggles of the class, left the workers in the hands of the careerists and opportunists who sold out the movement to further their own positions.

Early in 1893 a conference of Socialist and working class bodies was held at which the Independent Labour Party was formed. The SDF with its usual obstinacy, refused to co-operate and the result was the leadership of the new party, by far the largest Socialist Party in England, ended up in the hands of renegades like Snowden and Ramsay McDonald.

The SDF repeated this mistake even more disastrously in 1900 when the Labour Party (first known as the Labour Representation Committee) was formed by the TUC with the adherence of the ILP and the Fabian Society. This marked the formation of a mass independent political party of the workers, but under the leadership of men who were content to follow the lead of the Liberals on almost all questions. Yet, such as it was, the Labour Party was in fact the expression of the mass movement of the workers and its rank and file never succumbed entirely to the bourgeois infection which prostrated the leadership.

Inside the Party a constant war was going on against this infection, waged by a small minority of militant socialists. Lenin, supporting the application of the Labour Party for affiliation to the Second International in 1908, declared that: "it represents the first step on the part of the really proletarian organizations of England towards a conscious class party and towards a Socialist Labour Party."

The critical mistakes made by the British Socialists in their struggle with the more conservative elements within the broad union movement and within the Labour Party specifically, are that they failed: 1) to organize themselves into a coherent, cohesive organization; 2) they failed to integrate Marxist ideology into the more generalized struggles of the working class, and 3) they had abandoned the leadership of the various worker organizations leaving them in the hands of the careerists.

As a result, when the first world war broke out, the trade unions, the Labour Party and most of the Socialists, not only did not oppose the war, but in fact supported the intervention of British imperialism.

To be continued

Vol. 1, No. 3, Summer 1974 (available in September)
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Archives of the Revolution

How To Explain A "Transitional Program" To A Simple Worker

ARCHIVES OF THE REVOLUTION is a regular feature of WORKERS' TRUTH. Each month we reprint for the benefit of our readers part or all of a particular speech, article or document from the vast and rich heritage of the revolutionary Marxist movement. In this issue we reprint the article "How to Explain A "Transitional Program" to a Simple Worker". This article first appeared in the September-October 1946 issue of the BULLETIN of the Workers League for a Revolutionary Party. The WLRP was not a revolutionary Marxist current, but was rather an expression of the attempts of some would-be revolutionaries to go beyond the confines of Trotskyism. The WLRP correctly saw Trotskyism and its "transitional program" as another class enemy of the workers, just as Stalinism and Social-Democracy were. However, the WLRP could not draw the full lessons of the experiences of the workers' movement, which was shown by their belief that the Soviet Union was a "workers' state" which was dominated by a nationalist/reactionary bureaucracy, that the unions were workers' organizations and the absurdist theory that the Second Imperialist World War was a fraud! Despite their inability to come to grips with all the questions facing revolutionary workers, the exposure of Trotskyist "transitional" demagogy and parliamentary cretinism is worth reading. Today there are a plethora of Trotskyist tendencies all peddling some form of what the Socialist Workers Party was peddling in 1946. Some of these tendencies may be slicker than the others, but one thing is certain: they all stand solidly in the camp of capitalist counter-revolution.

There is one important shortcoming in this article. That is the failure to come out against parliamentarism in any way, shape or form. While the WLRP denounces the capitalist tendencies which masquerade as workers' parties, they fail to make it clear that in the epoch of capitalist decadence, the epoch in which we live today, meaningful social reform through capitalist parliaments is impossible. It is not simply the fact that these parties are bourgeois (although that is the reason they concentrate on parliamentary activity), even a revolutionary party would be unable to achieve gains for the working class through parliamentary activity. Any such activity by would-be revolutionaries can only be a deterrent to the class struggle and play into the hands of capital.

A TROTSKYIST-I belong to the Socialist Workers Party, the Trotskyist Party.

A WORKER-I'm for the Democratic Party.

T.-You shouldn't be. The Democratic Party does not serve your interests.

W.-What Party should I be for?

T.- A Labor Party.

W.-Are you also for a Labor Party?

T.-Yes, naturally.

W.-But you just said you belong to the Trotskyist Party. Is that the Labor Party you mentioned?

T.-No, the Trotskyist Party is different, it stands for proletarian revolution and socialism.

W.-Is a Labor Party also for what you call proletarian revolution and socialism?

T.-Well, no, not exactly.

W.-But YOU are for proletarian revolution and socialism?

T.-Yes, of course.

W.-Then why are YOU for a Labor Party?

T.-You see, I'm for a Labor Party because YOU are for the Democratic Party. You have to get promoted politically, so to speak. For YOU to be for a Labor Party would be an advance.

W.-Let me get this straight. A Labor Party does not stand for the proletarian revolution and socialism you say you stand for, but for me it would be an advance to be for a Labor Party.

T.-That's about the size of it. We're trying to raise the political level of the working class in general by elevating the workers to being for a Labor Party.

W.-Now, let me ask you this. Since this Labor Party is not for proletarian revolution and socialism, would you say that it is in my interests?

T.-Naturally we're very critical toward the Labor Party. We don't say point blank that it would directly serve the workers' interests. But it would be a stage toward proletarian revolution and socialism.

W.-Should I have been for a Labor Party Government in the British elections last year?

T.-Yes, of course.

W.-Then you would have wanted me, that is, the workers to vote for the British Labor Party.

T.-Definitely. We told the workers to vote for Attlee, Bevin and the other British Laborites.

W.-Ah, now I understand. The British Labor Party is the kind of Labor Party you want me to be for.

T.-Oh, no! The British Labor Party is a rotten sell-out party, has been for years.

W.-But still you wanted me to vote for it. Maybe I don't understand, after all.

T.-It's this way. When you're for the Democratic Party, then to change to being for a Labor Party is an advance for you, even though the Labor Party sells you down the river just the same as the Democratic Party.

W.-Would you have voted for the British Labor Party?

T.-Yes, that's our line.

W.-But you knew all along that the Labor Party sells out the workers and has been doing so for a long time.

T.-Naturally.

W.-Still, you would have voted for it. Mighty peculiar. Wouldn't it be simpler just to tell me that the Labor Party is a sell-out Party and that it would be foolish for me to support it?

T.-No, first we try to get you to support what is against your interests because it is in your interests to take that step.

W.-By the way, what do you think of the British Labor Party Government?

T.-It's betraying the workers all down the line. Look at the way the British imperialists are murdering the workers of India and Palestine. That scoundrel, Attlee, tries to justify such crimes.

W.-But since the Labor Party Government is betraying the workers all down the line, as you yourself say, I can't for the life of me understand why I should have voted for the Labor Party.

T.-Because you are not for a Labor Party yet. If you voted for it, that would be an advance for you.

W.-But what about the workers of India and Palestine who are being murdered by the British Labor Government troops? How would the workers in those places feel toward me if I helped to elect such a Government? You say I have to get advanced to being for a Labor Party, but wouldn't the workers of India and Palestine have a sneaking suspicion that when I supported the Labor Party I was advancing over their dead bodies?

T.-Perhaps, but when you would see those workers being murdered by Attlee and Bevin's troops, then you would become disillusioned even with the Labor Party, you would move more to the Left, and that would be a still better advance for you.

W.-Maybe so, but that wouldn't wash the blood of those workers off my hands which helped to elect the Labor Government. I still say it would be simpler for you just to warn me beforehand that the Laborites are scoundrels and that I should NOT vote them into office.

T.-Politics are pretty complicated. We also advocate the formation of a Stalinist-Socialist coalition government in France, England, Italy, and so forth. That's our Trotskyist Transitional Program.

W.-Is that a government in the interests of the workers?

T.-Well, it's on the basis of capitalism, and the Stalinist Communists and the Socialists certainly don't serve the interests of the workers.

W.-Therefore I may assume that a Stalinist-Socialist coalition Government will also sell me down the river.

T.-We don't say point blank that a Labor Party Government or a Stalinist-Socialist coalition Government would be against the interests of the workers. Concretely, such governments sell out the workers, but historically, they do them a lot of good because they expose themselves before the workers and so help them move more to the Left.

W.-I may seem narrow-minded, but it's very queer to advocate the formation of any Government which would sell out the workers, as you say these governments would.

T.- Mass pressure might compel the Laborites, Stalinists and Socialists who form a Government to pass acts benefitting the workers, though I'll admit there's not too much chance of this.

W.-What does it all boil down to? If these Parties in the Government improved my living conditions, I would support THEM. If they did me harm, then YOU would be in the position of having advocated a government which acted against my interests, and I would hold you responsible. In any case, your Trotskyist Party wouldn't cut much ice with me. Anybody who helps put a Government which injures me is no friend of mine.

T.-Our Transitional Program will get clearer to you when you think it over. Take a simpler case. We supported the Stalinist bureaucrat, Ben Davis, in New York in the election sometime back.

W.-I don't believe it!

T.-I can prove it. Here's our paper, THE MILITANT, where it says that the workers should vote for Ben Davis "because he is a Negro candidate on the ticket of a working class party".

W.-Wasn't he on the ticket of the Communist Party, the Stalinists, as you call them, the betrayers of labor?

T.-Yes.

W.-And the Stalinist Communist Party is also a working class Party?

T.-Yes, our paper, THE MILITANT, says so here, black on white.

W.-Just a moment, I'm getting pretty dizzy. In the few minutes we've been talking, you've thrown no fewer than three working class Parties at me, the Trotskyist Party, the Labor Party and the Stalinist Party. Two of these you already have told me betray the interests of the workers. I take it that you consider your Trotskyist Party is loyal to the workers. Yet the two betrayers and the one faithful all seem to be working class Parties, according to your reckoning. Do you want me to be for the Stalinist Party also? Do you want me to be for all three working class Parties at once?

T.-No, we don't want you to be for the Stalinist Party, we just wanted the workers to vote for its candidate.

W.-Is there a difference? If I vote for a candidate, it's because I'm for his Party, and if I'm for a Party, I vote for its candidates. I don't do any fancy bookkeeping in these matters.

T.-Of course, there's the point that Davis was a NEGRO candidate, and--

W.-Now don't go bringing up the man's race. I'm not so stupid that I'd vote for a man because of the color of his skin. You yourself just told me this Davis was a Stalinist candidate. I should guess from that you don't consider him exactly an angel.

T.-Oh, he's a Stalinist rat, no doubt.

W.-Still, I should have voted for him.

T.-Yes, definitely, as a NEGRO candidate of a working class Party.

W.-You know, if I actually voted for this list of rats, scoundrels and betrayers you've been pushing at me, I'd have to take out my conscience and fumigate. You look like a nice fellow, but you certainly have a queer way of going about urging people to keep company at the polls with the smelliest assortment of human tripe.

T.-It's part of our campaign to raise the level of the workers.

W.-What makes the MILITANT say the Stalinist Party is a working class Party? Is it for the workers?

T.-Oh, no, it's against the interests of the workers.

W.-Here we go again. If the Stalinist Party is against the interests of the workers, how is it a working class Party?

T.-We mean that many workers support it.

W.-Well, I'm sure that more workers support the Democratic Party than the Stalinist Party; that makes the Democratic Party also a working class Party. That would be four working class Parties in one afternoon.

T.-No, of course, the Democratic Party is not a working class Party. The fact that many workers support it is not the point. The Stalinist Party pretends to be a working class Party, and many workers fall for it.

W.-Don't tell me its PRETENSES make it a working class Party!

T.-Naturally not. The point is that many workers THINK it's a working class Party.

W.-I see, you mean that the workers' CONFUSION makes it a working class party.

T.-In a strictly scientific sense, the Stalinist Party is not a working class party because its policies betray the workers. Fundamentally, it's an anti-working class Party.

W.-But your paper, THE MILITANT, said plainly that the workers should vote for Davis because he was a Negro candidate of a working class party. That was one of the reasons your paper gave for voting for Davis. Well, anyway, it's clear the workers wouldn't vote for Davis if they were convinced he represents an anti-working class Party. That would certainly be stupid electioneering, from Davis' standpoint. I'll bet he also told the workers he's the candidate of a working class Party.

T.-Well, of course, he's a liar. That is, I mean--

W.-I see what you mean. He's a liar, but THE MILITANT has a Transitional Program. Are there any more working class Parties?

T.-Well, the Trotskyist Party was discussing uniting with Shachtman's Workers Party.

W.-What, another one! Who are these guys?

T.-Oh, a gang of petty-bourgeois revisionists, we call them. Their outfit is strictly no good.

W.-But you were discussing uniting with them? I don't get it.

T.-There was nothing definite. We were just discussing. Our leader, Comrade Cannon, was communicating with them about it.

W.-If they're no good, why talk about uniting with them? I wouldn't unite with a bunch of no-goods. I wouldn't even discuss it.

T.-In politics it's very complicated. Today you break with people because they're rotten renegades, but tomorrow you may unite with them. That's the dialectical development of history.

W.-Very interesting. I wouldn't have thought it possible.

T.-Yes, as Comrade Cannon said in his history of our Party - with us, nothing is impossible.

W.-I must admit your Transitional Program is quite beyond me. A fellow like me would never support anybody he knows are a pack of fakers, like you know the Stalinist leaders are, and he would never tell others to vote for them. When I know any Party is my enemy, I'm against it, plain and simple. However, as they say, where there's life, there's hope. Maybe some day I'll learn to support my known enemies. In that case I'll join up with your Trotskyist Party. I want to thank you for a very interesting discussion.

T.-Don't mention it. Always glad to spread Trotskyist enlightenment.

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FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM!

The world we live in is a world where people are divided into classes according to their role in production. The two major classes in society are the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalists own the means of production (factories, machines, etc.) but produce nothing. The workers, on the other hand, receive only meager wages for the sale of their labor power to the capitalists. Almost all production in society is done by the workers. However, almost all the benefits from this production go to the capitalists. The basis for production in this society is profit. The capitalists are not interested in having the workers produce things that people can use or that people need. They are only interested in what makes them the biggest profit. Thus, while the capitalists get richer and richer, the workers are worse off than they were before.

In order to increase profits the capitalists resort to all sorts of techniques which most of us are familiar with: speed-up, wage cuts, unemployment, labor-saving machinery. While, for instance, labor-saving machinery would be progressive in a society run by the workers, it does nothing for them under capitalism. It is just another attack on the workers.

Another feature of capitalist society is war. Every day there is a war going on somewhere in the world. This is due to the necessity of the capitalists to wage war in order to get ahead of the capitalists in other countries. The working class has no interests in supporting these wars. What the workers want is peace. However, there can be no peace until the capitalists have been removed from power and this society replaced by one run by the workers in the interests of the toiling masses.

To do this, it is not enough to elect people to Congress or as President. The government is nothing more than the executive committee of the ruling class. It is the owners of the big corporations who have the final say as to what goes on. It is necessary to organize our own workers' councils. These councils will be the class rule of the workers after the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. When capitalism goes Congress will go with it. All the democracy surrounding the Congress is just a sham to keep us tied to this system. It is democracy for the rich, for the capitalists. Our democracy will be real democracy, proletarian democracy, the democracy of the many. We do not simply want a workers' government, we want a workers' republic.

In order to throw out the capitalists and build a workers' republic and socialism the working class needs a revolutionary party. Such a party must be based on *The Communist Manifesto*, the first two congresses of the Communist (Third) International, and the revolutionary work of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Bogdanov. It must be a democratic-centralist party. However, it is not enough to build such a party here in the United States. Capitalism is a world system. Even so-called "Communist" Russia and China are capitalist (state capitalist). In order to wage a successful worldwide struggle against capitalism the workers must have an international party. It is toward the construction of the International Party of Revolutionary Workers (Fourth International) that the Revolutionary Workers Group and *Workers' Truth* are dedicated.

In 1917 the Russian workers seized power under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party. However, the revolution was isolated and the Russian workers exhausted from the hard struggle in a backward country lost power when the Bolsheviks lost faith in the world proletariat in 1921. The four years of the revolutionary dictatorship still remain, however, as a beacon for workers throughout the world.

Under capitalism the workers are nothing more than menials. We deserve a better life. We deserve socialism. However, it will not be handed to us on a platter. We must fight for it. For if we do not fight for socialism we will be handed barbarism. Socialism or barbarism? *Fight for Socialism!*

The Impossibility of Reforms

The following article is excerpted from the Perspectives document of the WORLD REVOLUTION group in Great Britain. It first appeared in the May issue of WORLD REVOLUTION.

The history of the proletarian class and of the institutions thrown up in the course of struggle is naturally related to the development of capitalism itself. The early workers movement of the 19th century reflected the immaturity of capitalist development. The proletariat's immediate objectives were concerned with the improvement of its position within capitalism, to better its wages and conditions of life generally. The struggle to form and use political parties and unions for this purpose reflected an essential strengthening of the working class in the ascendant era of capitalism when revolution was not yet on the historical agenda. The aims of these reformist working class movements included the shortening of the working day, wage increases and general social and political improvements such as literacy, universal franchise, freedom of the press, speech and assembly. The hard struggle for these lasting reforms went hand in hand with the formation of independent, permanent organizations of the working class - unions and political organizations. These organizations, in their positive aspects, helped strengthen the working class and helped to develop its self-confidence to pursue further reforms.

Ascendant capitalism did not merely accomodate these reforms; in a real sense they were beneficial to capitalism's own development. The increase in wages, the shortening of the working day from 18 to 10 hours, the spreading of literacy, all of these contributed to the expansion of capitalism and to the development of the productive forces. However, the working class had to struggle fiercely and bloodily to wrest every concession from the bourgeoisie. Moreover, while waging a militant and principled struggle for the "minimum program" of reforms, revolutionary marxists always understood that capitalism would inevitably enter a historic crisis which would necessitate its violent overthrow and the application of the "maximum program" - socialism.

In the 19th century revolutionary tendencies could maintain an uneasy co-existence with reformist currents in the workers movement (as was the case in the First and Second Internationals). The last decade of the century produced from within the workers movement a coherent tendency which abandoned the "maximum program" in favour of the immediate goals of the movement, or theorised about a gradual parliamentary road to "socialism" which they identified with the centralisation of capital by the state. The completely reactionary nature of this current (and of the "Centrists" who apologised for them), was not clearly revealed until 1914, when the main Social Democratic Parties helped to mobilise the working class for the imperialist war. From then on it is impossible for any working class tendency to have a reformist nature: an organization is either revolutionary or it is a part of capitalism.

In the decadent era of capitalism no real and lasting reforms can be won by the working class. If some part of the class at certain times can fight for and get a wage increase or some such "reform", the historic bankruptcy of capitalism demands that this be eroded or taken away immediately either from those same workers or other sections of the class through inflation, higher productivity quotas, overtime or taxation. In attempting to reduce what it is forced to yield to the working class the bourgeoisie systematically attacks the concessions the proletariat has obtained in the past.

Although the higher consumption levels of certain sections of the class have produced an illusion of "affluence" and of a gradual improvement in living standards, these "gains" have been nothing but a brittle and temporary result of the whole cycle of crisis, war and reconstruction which characterises this epoch. The postwar boom which is at the bottom of the so-called affluent society is the direct result of the massive destruction of productive forces not only of machinery and goods but also of around 55 million human beings which took place between 1939 and 1945. The next crisis of capitalism, in the absence of the world revolution, threatens even more frightening consequences which would completely wipe out all the "reforms" obtained through the war. In this historical framework, "reformism" is utopian and in fact non-existent. The only meaning the term "reformism" has today is the self-transformation of capitalism into more decayed forms; in the absence of a communist transformation of society, capitalism can only "reform" itself into self-annihilation.